



Welcome to the March edition of the Dulles Direct Newsletter. This past month has been extremely busy as the Board of Supervisors has been working on the FY13 budget, which totals over \$1.8 billion. I would like to thank everyone that has taken the time to communicate with me on the budget and other matters. I read every email, and do my best to respond as quickly as I can. Due to the intensity of the work this month, my response time has lagged somewhat but I will be doing my best to get caught up over the next few weeks.

You have probably noticed by now that I will periodically send out news alerts when there is a particular event or issue that I believe deserves your attention right away. While I will continue to do this, I do urge you to visit my [Facebook page](#) as this is the best way to stay up to date on key issues.

Legislative Update

FY13 Budget: Most of the past month has been spent working on the budget. Since this was the first budget for seven of us, we were as methodical as possible during the process. At every work session, particular departments came before us for a review of their budget requests and the Board took “straw votes” to set funding levels. This past Monday was our last work session, and now we will take up formal consideration of the budget resolution at the April 3 business meeting.

The Board of Supervisors has directed staff to draft a budget resolution that will set the tax rate at \$1.235 per \$100 assessed. This represents a five cent reduction from the FY12 tax rate of \$1.285 and a 3.5 cent reduction from the “zero tax increase” budget of \$1.27 (which takes into account a slight increase in assessments).

There are some major items included that I’d like to review:

-Gum Springs Library: The budget includes \$1.7 million that was added at my request to fully staff the Gum Springs Library, which will enable it to open on time in December 2012. (I previously discussed this in a news alert.)

-Public Safety: The budget includes a \$700,000 increase in the Sheriff's Office budget to implement night shift differential (Loudoun is the only jurisdiction in the area which does not pay any kind of extra stipend to deputies who work night shifts). This increase adds needed positions as well, including an additional crime analyst to work on gang-related activity and an additional forensic technician to help alleviate a growing backlog of evidence that must be analyzed. At my request, the budget also includes \$40,000 so that 4 individuals based at the Dulles South Fire Rescue Station can train in Advance Life Support, which will give the Dulles South Station the capability to deploy an ALS ambulance unit. (I also discussed this in more detail in a news alert.)

-Schools: The Board of Supervisors began budget deliberations by reducing the School Board's budget proposal by \$44 million. I voted against the motion because I thought the reduction was too drastic given the fact that the new School Board made a serious effort at budget reductions prior to sending us the budget. It became one of my goals to see at least a portion of that funding restored to the budget. After many discussions, the Board voted 5-3 to add \$22 million back into the budget for Loudoun County Public Schools.

My personal opinion is that this number is still on the low side by several million. However, there are not five votes to place any more money into the school budget. Given developments in Richmond, it does appear that LCPS will be receiving somewhere in the neighborhood of \$5-\$6 million from the Commonwealth to help minimize the impacts.

As a result of the Board's action, LCPS will receive \$51 million more than FY2012, an increase of 6.9 percent. I point this out because it is not accurate to say that the school budget has been "cut." Having worked in Congress for a number of years, I am familiar with the rhetorical game that is sometimes played in which one side proposes a budget increase that is more than what the other proposed, and then accuses their foes of "cutting" the budget. So, we should all be clear—the LCPS budget is not being cut.

That said, almost every dollar of the \$51 million is accounted for by new requirements. We are required by law to fund \$35 million for the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) for teachers. \$10 million of that is being paid for by a surplus at the end of this fiscal year that was set aside by the Board of Supervisors. Unfortunately, the previous school board decided to spend its surplus last year—some of it on items that I believe were rather questionable, at least compared to the needs we are now facing.

Beyond that, LCPS must absorb 2,500 new students and open 2 new schools, which will cost about another \$25 million. So essentially, the school budget is flat, except for VRS and new students and schools. It is for that reason that I would have preferred giving the School Board a little more breathing room—even accounting for money coming in from Richmond—but as I said, there simply were not the votes to do so on the Board.

At this point, it is entirely up to the School Board to decide how to allocate its funding. They have a difficult job ahead of them and will have to make some tough choices, just as the Board of Supervisors has had to do with the county budget. During the course of my research, I did identify some areas I think the School Board should examine and have communicated that to

them. In particular, some of the employee benefits, particularly for what I would consider to be part-time employees, are quite clearly well above what other surrounding jurisdictions—even Fairfax County—are offering by a significant amount. (Currently, LCPS sets “full time employee” definition at 17.5 hours per week, which certainly is not a standard applied in the private sector.) I hope they will take a look at that area and perhaps bring our offerings more in line with industry standards.

-Economic Development: This is the area that I’m personally most pleased with. As Chairman of the Economic Development Committee, I was involved in crafting a \$600,000 budget increase for the Loudoun County Department of Economic Development designed specifically to get more “boots on the ground” to recruit businesses to Loudoun. My motion passed 8-1. After a substantial review, it was clear to me that we needed a more robust sales force with better resources to attract businesses. As part of the budget enhancement, I worked with the department director and the county administrator to reorganize the department to better meet our needs and to begin to implement a new commission-based pay structure for appropriate employees within the department—like a true sales force has.

In this area, we have to spend money to make money, but the rewards are significant. Attracting businesses will help expand our tax base and lower the burden on homeowners. Just as importantly, creating jobs in Loudoun takes cars off of our regional transportation grid and improves our quality of life. I believe that our economic development efforts are now moving in the right direction—full speed ahead—and I think that this is probably the most significant accomplishment for the new Board in our first three months.

-County Staffing: County employees’ take home pay will not increase this year due to structural changes the Board made. The Board chose to require that employees pay 5 percent towards their VRS accounts. The law mandates that we give them a corresponding 5 percent pay increase to make up for that contribution, but the net result is a slight reduction in take home pay. However, the Board also set up a new and innovative program designed to boost productivity in which employees can earn merit based bonuses if they find the cost savings in their department during the course of the year (capped at 2%). The Commonwealth of Virginia started this program under Governor McDonnell and it has proven to be successful.

Overall, I think we’ve struck a fairly good balance between meeting the needs of our citizens and beginning to reduce the tax burden on families. There are some who believe that we didn’t cut enough, and others who believe that we cut too much. Ultimately, I believe it is important that we reverse the trend of tax increases and begin to focus on leaner, more efficient government. I know that the School Board shares the goal of efficient services for LCPS. I remain optimistic that over the course of our terms, we both will be able to address some structural areas which are currently resulting in high costs. Having been through the budget process, I know that I personally have several major items that I want to research over the coming year so that we can potentially address them in next year’s budget. This year, I was very cautious with my votes, particularly on motions to eliminate positions or programs, because I wanted to make sure that I fully understood the implications of those cuts.

Dulles South Elementary School (ES-21): Over the course of the last month and a half, I have worked with School Board Representative Jeff Morse to determine the best location and most appropriate timing for the next elementary school in the Dulles District. LCPS projections show significant overcrowding beginning next year at Liberty and Pinebrook Elementary Schools which need to be alleviated by a new school. Jeff led an effort on the School Board to move the construction of ES-21 up one year to FY13 so that the new school could open up in 2014. The location assigned was next to J. Michael Lunsford Middle School on a site known as Grant Perkins. The School Board voted 5-4 to make those designations.

After many hours of discussions with staff, including some fresh analysis, I believe this was the right decision. However, last week, the Board of Supervisors voted 5-3-1 to move ES-21 back one year and assign it to a parcel of land at East Gate which had previously been considered for a school and rejected by both the School Board and the Board of Supervisors. This particular parcel has area designated as wetlands, including a stream which literally runs right through the middle of it. As it currently stands, staff analysis is that a normal sized school could not fit on the site. Therefore, LCPS has been exploring acquiring additional property next to that site. However, I have become convinced that the land acquisition process could become quite expensive and very time consuming—delaying the opening of the school even beyond 2015.

The objection to locating the school on the Grant Perkins site is that it is 48 acres, which is more than what is needed for an elementary school (and perhaps could be big enough for a future high school). I certainly understand that concern; however our enrollment projections do not show a need for another high school for at least the next six years, and John Champe is projected to be under capacity for that entire time. Therefore, I believe that we should address the need that we currently have for an elementary school, and look elsewhere for a high school property down the road. I also think that the remaining portion of the Grant Perkins site could potentially be put to other good uses by the county.

Since the time of the Board's vote, I have been doing everything I can to educate my colleagues about this issue and I know that several are now reconsidering. This week, Chairman Scott York moved to set up separate work sessions—outside of the budget process—to study ES-21 and determine the correct location for it, as well as to have a discussion about Dulles South school planning in general. I am thankful to Chairman York for his motion because I believe it will allow for a much more complete discussion. He has indicated that he will be inviting representatives from LCPS, county staff, and members of the School Board to participate.

I do not yet know when that work session will take place, but I certainly will provide updates. We will need to make a decision by this summer to allow for an item to be placed on the November bond referendum if the Board decides to move the school to FY13. I think it is vitally important that members of the Dulles South community also participate in this discussion, and I hope that you will do so.

Lyme Disease Awareness: Lyme disease has become a serious concern for many in Loudoun County. The rate of Lyme infection has continued to increase, not just in rural Loudoun but in suburban neighborhoods as well. In recognition of this, the Board has declared 2012 to be Lyme

Disease Awareness Year and passed a 10-point plan to begin combating this disease in our county.

Though most of the 10-point plan is being sent to the Finance, Government Services and Operations Committee for review, a few of the steps will be acted on right away. One of these steps is to begin a pilot program to spray for ticks in several county-owned parks in order to reduce their population. At my request, Conklin Park in South Riding has been included as part of this pilot program.

A major factor in combating Lyme disease is awareness and prevention. The plan the Board has begun implementing includes several new initiatives, including one aimed at the medical community so that they gain a better understanding of what to look for and how to treat potential cases of Lyme.

Metro: A few weeks ago, Loudoun County received the final “Project Engineering” for Phase II of Metro. The final phase of the project to expand the Metro into Loudoun is expected to cost roughly \$2.7 billion. If Loudoun chooses to opt-in to Metro, it will be responsible for about \$283 million. In addition, Loudoun will be responsible for an annual contribution to Metro’s operating and maintenance fund, which likely will be a fixed percentage of the overall system costs.

The specific dollar amounts associated with that contribution are still unknown and are currently in negotiation, as are several other issues. In addition, there is still a major dispute about whether Phase II of Metro will give preference to union labor. I oppose such a preference because it will likely lead to higher costs and give jobs to out of state workers since Virginia is a right-to-work state with very few union contractors. The union preference is being pushed by an MWAA Board member who works for a major labor union. Moreover, the General Assembly has passed legislation prohibiting any state money from being used on the project should MWAA proceed on this path. While we do not currently know what that contribution could be (it is currently set at \$150 million, but the Senate just added an additional \$300 million to that total which is still in negotiation in the House), the bottom line is that MWAA's insistence on union preferences will jeopardize state funds, costing commuters more money in toll increases to pay for Metro.

The Board voted 4-3 (I was in favor) of asking the other potential partners for a 30-day extension to the 90-day window to make a decision. Last week, MWAA and Fairfax County granted that extension, meaning that we now have until the first week of July to make a decision. I appreciate the feedback I’m getting from residents so far on Metro, and I hope to receive much more. I will be holding a town hall meeting on this subject once I have a better idea of what the final numbers look like so we can have a community discussion about the costs and benefits of Metro. This is a big, generational decision for Loudoun County and I want to make sure we get it right.

To read the preliminary engineering report or to keep up to date on the Metro issue, visit the [Dulles Rail](#) page on the county website.

Dulles District Updates

I included several district-specific items in my budget report this month, so this section is much shorter. I did want to mention that I have not yet heard from VDOT about any additional plans for temporary lane closures on Route 50 following the situation we had at the Fairfax County line. When I have some news to report on this front, I will provide an update.

Also of note, the Board of Supervisors approved an application (9-0) to build a new daycare facility and self-storage mini-warehouse in Stone Ridge. I think both are needed and were well designed. Right now, many folks travel across the border to Fairfax County for storage. Besides being inconvenient, we are losing that sales tax revenue!

Announcements

South Riding Spring Business Expo and Community Yard Sale: The Spring Business Expo and Community Yard Sale will take place on Saturday, May 5th at the Dulles South Multipurpose Center. More information is available on the website by [clicking here](#). I will have a booth at the event and will be available to answer questions throughout the morning.

Prom Wishes: The Junior Woman's Club of Loudoun (JWCL) will be holding their annual prom event for all high school girls in the community. Through Prom Wishes, JWCL collects prom dresses and accessories which are then made available at a one-day boutique where the high school girls can select prom attire free of charge. This year's event will take place April 21st from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at the Hampton Inn – Dulles/Cascades. (*Please note the change in venue.*) From March 1st to April 7th, JWCL will be collecting new or gently used dresses, shoes, purses, jewelry, accessories, and un-opened cosmetics. All donations may be left at any Loudoun County Library or at the South Riding Town Hall. For more information please email promwishes@jwcl.org.

Welcome Discovery: The Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum is planning a festival of activities to celebrate the acquisition of the Space Shuttle *Discovery*. The exact flight path from Florida to the Washington Dulles International Airport is not known but the public is invited to participate in Spot the Shuttle activities on the morning of April 17th. Activities at the Udvar-Hazy Center will begin April 19th when *Discovery* will be officially transferred into the Smithsonian's collection. All activities are free of charge but there is a \$15 parking fee. For more information on the festival, please visit the [Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum](#).

Job & Career Fair: Congressman Frank Wolf will be hosting a free Job and Career Fair on April 2nd from 10:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at Harper Park Middle School (701 Potomac Station Drive, Leesburg, VA 20176). For more information, please call 703-709-5800 or visit Wolf.House.Gov. A complete list of participating employers is available [online](#).

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